

<http://blog.beliefnet.com/news/2009/06/us-religious-freedom-panel-den.php>

WASHINGTON (RNS) Indian government officials have denied visas to commissioners of a U.S. religious freedom watchdog panel for the second time since 2001.

Members of the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)** were forced to cancel their plans to assess religious freedom in India. Panelists were scheduled to leave on June 12, and have been trying to obtain Indian visas for the past seven years.

Nina Shea, a commissioner, said it is troublesome that the Indian authorities are so defensive about exposing potential religious violence in the world's largest democracy.

"I believe at the root of this, they want to cover it up," she said. "They have something to hide."